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# OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN

in **HARMONY**



Olivia relaxing at her Gaia Retreat & Spa in Byron Bay, Australia

For many people, the first image of Olivia Newton-John that comes to mind is her big moment in *Grease* when she's transformed from the innocent, squeaky clean Sandy Olsson to a hot babe telling John Travolta that he'd "better shape up!" This year she reminded people to shape up once again in a hilarious parody of her number one hit "Physical" on the popular show *Glee*, which introduced her to an entire new generation of fans. In reality, her remarkable career has spanned four decades with more than 50 million albums sold, five No. 1 hits, four Grammy awards, films, musicals, and numerous appearances that have captured the hearts of fans worldwide.

Through it all, the beloved star also suffered some ups and downs, ranging from disappointments in her career to a failed marriage and a battle with breast cancer. The way she's handled her hardships with determination, grace and optimism has endeared her to millions of fans who are inspired by her goals to make the world a better place.

These days, the world is definitely a better place for Olivia. She's in tune with her health, passionate about the environment and has found her soul mate in her second marriage to "Amazon John" Easterling. It seems Olivia has found the balance, peace and harmony she's been looking for, and she was happy to talk about it over dinner with Garden of Life® founder Jordan Rubin, an avid *Grease* fan who still harbors an occasional fantasy of playing Danny Zuko in an off, off Broadway production somewhere.



**JR: You reached stardom at a very young age. How old were you when you starred in *Grease*?**

ONJ: I was 29 and very freaked out that I wasn't going to look young enough! Now when I'm looking back at it, I think "Goodness, what was I worried about?" But at the time, it was a real concern for me.

**JR: Did you grow up pursuing theatre, acting and singing?**

ONJ: I started singing when I was a young girl. I wasn't that interested in school, but I was always singing and thought I was going to be the best. When I was 15, I won a talent contest that was broadcast on television in Australia. My boyfriend was a singer and he put me up to it, so I entered and won the whole thing. Because it was seen by so many people on TV, it launched my career.

**JR: When you were younger, did you have any references for healthy living or were you just blessed with great metabolism and genetics?**

ONJ: My mother was German and she prepared very healthy meals. She would cook and grill vegetables and fix salads for us because she was very health conscious. As a teenager, I didn't appreciate this because everyone else I knew was eating white bread and other unhealthy food, but as I got older I recognized what healthy habits she instilled in all of us. I find that I still eat the way she taught us.

**JR: When you became a worldwide icon and were extremely busy, did you fall into any bad habits that sometimes happen from traveling so much?**

ONJ: Not too much. When I was younger, I had migraines, but they were really digestive related, so I had to watch what I ate so I wouldn't trigger the headaches. I don't have them anymore and have since learned to take digestive enzymes with every meal. I was always conscious of what I ate and how I looked because I was onstage a lot and always being fitted for costumes. I'm still very conscious about what I eat, but I indulge occasionally with a small bit of chocolate or something I enjoy.

**JR: In your mid-to-late thirties, did you consider yourself an extremely healthy person?**

ONJ: Yes, I did. I had my daughter, Chloe, when I was 37 and I was very focused on feeding her and keeping her healthy. Also, my friends and I started the Collette Chuda Environmental Fund (CCEF) which has evolved into Healthy Child, Healthy World—which focuses on environmental toxins and their effects on children—when their daughter (and my daughter's best friend) died of cancer. She was just four years old and her parents thought it might have been environmentally related. When this happened, I became much more conscious of everything, and particularly concerning my child.



**JR: In 1992 when you were diagnosed with breast cancer, what were the first thoughts that crossed your mind?**

ONJ: I can't remember exactly. I do remember that I laughed and made some silly jokes to my doctor because that's how I cope with stress. In the first few hours, I was in a little bit of denial. I had to go through lots of tests, so eventually the fear set in and I had to make a decision—and I decided I was going to be okay! I never thought "Why me? Why did this happen to me?" I also wrote a song about the experience on my album, "Gaia," and it was very emotional. Looking back on it, I see that if I had not gone on that journey with cancer that I wouldn't be doing what I am now to help others who are coping with it.

**JR: Sometimes you really do have to go through a mess before you can be a messenger. In the first few hours**



**following your diagnosis, what did you believe the outcome was going to be? Did you think you were going to beat it or were you overcome with fear?**

ONJ: Well, it really didn't hit me at first and so I had a delayed reaction. The first night alone in my house was the most fearful time because I was waiting on the tests to come back to see if the cancer had spread anywhere else in my body. I made the decision I was not going to give in to it because I had a young daughter. Deep down in my soul, I knew I was going to be alright.

**JR: I've been around a lot of people who have overcome disease, and they have all talked more about how they would overcome it instead of all of their symptoms. What did you say when family and friends would call to console you?**

ONJ: It freaked me out when people would call and start crying. After a while I had my girlfriend and sister talking to everyone so that I didn't have to deal with it every day. In fact, that's one of the things I recommend to anyone going through cancer. Get someone else to take those phone calls for you so that you can focus on healing!

**JR: What was your exact diagnosis?**

ONJ: I believe it was DCIS (ductal carcinoma in situ). Ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) is the most common type of non-invasive breast cancer. Ductal means that the cancer starts inside the milk ducts, carcinoma refers to any cancer that begins and in the skin or other tissues (including breast tissue) that cover or line the internal organs, and in situ means “in its original place.” DCIS is called “non-invasive” because it hasn’t spread beyond the milk ducts into any surrounding normal breast tissue. DCIS isn’t life-threatening, but having DCIS can increase the risk of developing an invasive breast cancer later on.

**JR: What was your course of treatment as far as conventional medicine, and what did you change in terms of lifestyle habits that you could control?**

ONJ: I had surgery and afterward I met with an oncologist who recommended chemotherapy. I was very nervous about it and initially thought about not doing it. But I ended up going through chemo, and I can tell you that the surgery wasn’t as frightening as the chemotherapy treatments.

**JR: How did you handle the side effects of chemotherapy?**

ONJ: I did all of the natural treatments I knew how to do. I knew I’d have to balance my body any way I could, so I meditated and I took acupuncture treatments to help with the nausea. I took homeopathy, and luckily, my husband, John Easterling, was my friend back then and he gave me some wonderful herbs for my immune system. I didn’t tell my doctors all the things I was taking because they would have frowned on it. I drank a lot of green drinks and tried a macrobiotic diet for a while but had to stop when I became



Olivia in front of Kukura House, the main dining area at GAIA Retreat & Spa

too weak for it. It took a couple of years for me to really feel good again.

**JR: So it’s been 18 years and you believe you conquered cancer for a reason. Since then, you’ve done so much with your career and have entered the pop culture scene once again. My interest is in what you have done with your victory over cancer. How is your health today and what are you doing to spread the message of good health?**

ONJ: OJN: I co-own the Gaia Retreat and Spa in Byron Bay, Australia, which is the most beautiful place in the world and also my favorite place. I also have a farm, there. I always wanted to have a piece of Australia that was mine. When I go there, I stop first to go to my farm and then I go to the spa.

I’m also thrilled because I’m building the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Center in Melbourne, Australia. I was

approached by a hospital to help them build a cancer center, and I felt very strongly that there should be a wellness center attached to it. I’ve been doing fundraising events for the past seven years for it and just got \$70 million from the Australian government to finish it. I need to raise \$12 million more and it will be finished.

It has the most wonderful, state-of-the-art treatments. My dream one day is that it will just be a wellness center and not a cancer center because we’ll find a cure for cancer!

I really believe early detection is key because it certainly was in my case! I went to have a mammogram, and it was negative. I had a needle biopsy and that was also negative. I found the lump myself and then doctors found it through surgery.

I’m also involved with the Amazon Herb Company because of my wonderful husband who owns it. He’s part of the reason I’m on all natural therapies now!

**JR: Acai berry and many Amazon herbs are really popular right now, and John has certainly been on the forefront of this trend. What are your three favorite herbs?**

ONJ: The first is Camu Camu, a berry with the highest concentration of vitamin C of any fruit. I think it’s amazing. The second is Sangre de Drago—it’s the sap of a tree from the rainforest. The third is Recovazon gel.

**JR: What three superfoods provide you with the most health?**

ONJ: Organic eggs, blueberries and broccolini or any kind of greens.

**JR: Finally, what are your top three supplements?**

ONJ: Vitamin D, B vitamins and fish oil.